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Capitol Reef, Utah, USA: Pioneering efforts

by [Prakash Bang](#), Chief Editor

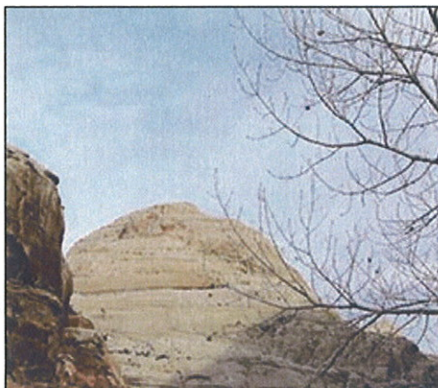


[Capitol Reef National Park](#) got its name from early explorers because of its massive [white sandstone domes](#) that resemble the US Capitol. Since the explorers came from the oceans, the formations they saw appeared to them as reefs – hence the name. The park includes multi-coloured cliffs, twisting canyons and miles of slick rock wilderness as well as pioneer orchards.

We left Monument Valley at 11AM. We drove using [the Scenic Hwy 24](#). Our first stop was at [Gooseneck State Park](#). Four miles off Utah Highway 261 near [Mexican Hat](#), you can look into a 1,000-foot-deep chasm carved through the Pennsylvanian Hermosa Formation by the silt-laden San Juan River. The river meanders back and forth, flowing for more than five miles while progressing only one linear mile toward the [Colorado River](#) and Lake Powell. Thanks I had a wide angle lens with me to capture the glory.

Moving forward, we witnessed the changing landscape - [serpentine roads](#) snaking through rocks of different shapes, colour and texture. At around 1PM we had lunch at one of the rest areas on the banks of River Colorado. We had our sandwiches with us. Our drive continued, crossing the Colorado River and into the historic district of Fruita.

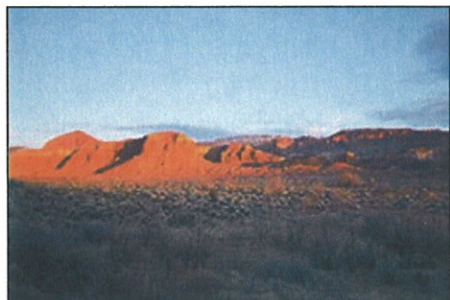
The Fruita Historic District is located just east of the Visitor Center along Hwy 24.



Anglo-American pioneers settled the Fremont River Valley in 1880, establishing a community called Fruita. They built simple homes, planted crops and opened a school. Some historic items remain from that period and are important resources managed by the park service. Legacy fruit orchards can be seen along the highway. Fruit from the trees is available to visitors seasonally. When we were around the opportunities were closed for the season.

[The old Fruita schoolhouse](#) has been restored and sits at its original location along Hwy 24. I wonder how this one-room school managed to hold classes across many grades! The historic Gifford Homestead, located along the park's Scenic Drive, is typical of rural Utah farm-houses of the early 1900s and is open during the summer season.

Ancient rock art can be seen along a sheer cliff that parallels Hwy 24 in the Fruita area. Most of the rock art figures were carved by people from the Fremont Culture. An astonishing collection of figures can be seen on several rock panels. Boardwalks and viewing areas have been established to make it easy for visitors to see the figures. Sadly, we just glanced through and made our way forward.



At around 4PM we were at the Capitol Reef National Park. If time is limited on hand, the simplest way to enjoy the spirit of the park is to take the 20-mile round trip loop that cuts through the narrow gorge. For neighbours you have mountains that soar up thousands of feet on both the sides. Hikers have the option to explore the gorge beyond the last point from where the vehicles turnaround.

By the time our loop was over, it was 6PM. We moved towards Torrey and checked into Best Western hotel on the outskirts of Torrey town. It's a very nice property. My room opened up into the wilderness offering me uninterrupted views.

Unfortunately, I was bit under the weather and thought of skipping dinner. A banana and a mug of hot chocolate saw me through the night.

Capitol Reef Image Gallery

